6:Oestreich E-5 (ca. 1943) 1944
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CULTURAL CHANGE AMONG THE WISCONSIN WINNEBAGO

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Introduction

Cultural change is one of the outstanding factors in the life of the Winnebago today. It is important to mention at the outset, however, that the following article does not purport to trace the long history of cultural change among the Winnebago, nor does it have any claim as a complete analysis; but, because of space limitations, it will serve merely as a passing observation of cultural change in a particular Indian group. The study is based primarily on observation of one small group of Winnebago during a period of five weeks. None the less, these data seem to comprise a fairly, though far from completely representative sample with which to work.

The Indians observed were family groups from almost all of the Winnebago communities scattered throughout the central part of the state. Our group, consisting of some 45 families, was predominately one of Wisconsin Winnebago, but also included three Winnebago families from Nebraska and one family each of the Chippewa, Menomini and Potawatomi tribes. The presence of these minorities within the larger group of Wisconsin Winnebago offered an interesting study of inter-land and intra-tribal contrasts.

The Wisconsin Winnebago prefer to live more or less independently in their native territory, Wisconsin, rather than join their friends and relatives on the Winnebago reservation located, by a whim of the government, in Nebraska. There is, however, a constant exchange of visits between the two groups.

In Wisconsin many of the Winnebago earn a living in the winter by trapping for the fur market, and in the summer by following various Wisconsin crops. The harvesting begins in the spring with the strawberry season, and ends in the fall with the gathering of cranberries.

Shows

I was drinking, he told me that he would treat me and the two women to beer that very night. I drank a lot of it that night and I enjoyed it immensely. After that, of course, I was not able to keep the fact of my drinking from other people. I talked at the top of my voice under the influence of liquor and was very happy. Every few minutes I would suddenly begin to sing out loudly. Then I began drinking whisky in addition to beer, and got drunk. On the following morning I said I would never do it again, but in a short time I was drinking beer again secretly. 159* 273

Eventually the show was over and we all went to our homes. We had to go across Lake Michigan. It was very stormy and we all got sick. Then my friend said, "Say, let us drink so that we may not be sick." He took out some whisky which he was carrying in a flask and we drank all night. Very early in the morning we got to Milwaukee. There we ate our breakfast and continued on our way home, to Black River Falls. We drank all the way on the train and when we reached our destination we were still drinking. All my relatives saw that I was drunk. They were very sorry and an older sister of mine wept when she saw me. I there made up my mind that I would never do it again. At about that time we received our annuity payment and although I had money I did not drink any more for some time. [657] ●

After we had spent what we had received in annuities the hunting season began. I went along with the others to the hunting grounds. I ran away from the two 159* 224 ∞∞

The Effect of a Pretended Blessing

Once when I was on one of my drinking sprees I visited the lodge of a relative of mine. There I found a woman whom I had the right to call niece and whom I could therefore tease. Just in jest I used to call her "mother" and "sister." Now on this particular occasion after food had been offered me, I began teasing her as usual when one of the women sitting around there said, "My younger brother, your niece is really in a condition to excite your compassion and not to fool with. She is in fact about to face death, for she is going to be confined soon and she generally manages barely to escape death then." "Oh, is that so?" answered I. "Well, elder sister, this time my niece is not going to suffer. Up above, in the heavens, there exist four women, sisters, and these blessed me, telling me that if I ever called upon them for help they would help me. Now to these I shall offer tobacco and when my niece is about to be delivered, she, too, must ask for help." Thus I spoke to her. The woman thanked me. I had told a terrible falsehood. I said all this because I was very hungry and I knew that I would then receive enough to appease my hunger. I had nothing else to say.

Some time after this I saw the women in town. The older woman ran over to me and said, "My younger brother, all is well. Your niece is in wonderful condition; she is very well indeed. She has just given birth to a child and within three days of its birth she was able to chop wood. Never before has such a thing happened to her. It is good. As soon as the annuity payment is made you may have the child's portion for drink.

159* 755 [273] [602] [845] [577] [657]

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§21. *Dissipation*

While staying at this woman's lodge I was one day handed a paper by a woman, in which she told me that she was married, that she was living at a certain place, and that if I came over, she would do whatever I said. I told the woman with whom I was living about it, and she said, "Go after her, that I may have her as my companion." Her father had a horse, and on it I rode over to the woman's house. I went there secretly, and watched the people digging potatoes, for their camp was nearby. The man to whom this woman was married was also living with another woman at the same time. The woman I was after was staying in this camp. I approached her secretly and when I reached the place she got herself ready to go with me. The two of us rode on a pony, and it so happened that we had to pass the place where the husband was working. He pursued us, but we managed to get away. In a short time I arrived home, and my wife received the second woman willingly. They would sleep with me on alternate nights.

After we finished our work there, we went to the place from which we had originally come, and we arrived home just in time for the annuity payment. The superintendent of the Wittenberg school made the

7:Radin E-5 (ca.1912) 1926 NP12 Winnebago NP12

*159 payment. At about the same time, one of the two
●651 women with whom I was living was taken away from
[588] me. She went to live with another man. When the
[837] payment was over here, the superintendent went to
[484] Necedah to pay the people there, and I went along, for I was doing what we called "chasing the payment." There, and at Red Hill, I deceived many women, and thus obtained quite a large sum of money. Then I
[203] started off with a number of other young men. By this time I was spending all my time drinking.

*159 I got on the train at night. We were to change cars
484 at a place called Honsa and from there we were to ride in a freight car. When we had gone only a short distance the conductor saw us and put us off. We were all drinking heavily. One man had lost his hat and was walking bareheaded. We walked along until we came to a pasture, and there we found some dry wood with which we built a fire. We had decided to sleep there. We had plenty of whisky with us. Late at night we became thirsty and so we looked around for water. We found a number of pools scattered around, and out of these we drank. Then we went to sleep. The next morning when we woke up we saw a good well near us, but we ourselves had drunk out of the water and mud in which pigs had been wallowing.

*159 In the morning when the train arrived we boarded it.
203 Eventually we reached our destination, and there found many people, drinking and making a lot of noise. That was exactly the place I had been looking for. When-
[685] ever I saw a person drunk I would steal whatever he

Dissipation

happened to have, for I had become a thief. If I saw a woman drunk, I would steal her, for I was an adulterer. What I was looking for mainly was a woman to cohabit with, for in this way, I was able to get all her money. If any woman wanted to cohabit with me, she would have to give me all the money she had. This is the sort of thing I was doing. In this way I often succeeded in inducing two or three women to live with me at the same time. 159 * [685] [203] [839]

After finishing at Necedah the superintendent always went to Tomah to pay the people there, and from Tomah he would proceed to Black River Falls. At Black River Falls the last payment was made, and for that reason it was always an extremely noisy place on such an occasion. All who liked this kind of a life, all who used to chase payments for the fun of it, would be there. Marriages would get badly mixed up here, and there would always be stealing of one another's wives, fighting, robbery, etc. Even those married people who had been faithful to each other up till then, would become unfaithful. Many people would get hurt. When the last payment had been made, all those who had not spent their last cent on drink would begin gambling, the men and women playing poker. Only when our last cent was gone would we stop and settle down. Many of us were generally left without enough money to go home. 159 * 657 ● [839] [579] [684] [525]

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§ 24. *A Woman Quarrels with Me*

*159 831 508 152 I was met by my father and mother and a woman who was living with me before I left. They were very glad to see me. When I got home I found many people camping there. At the camp the woman fixed a bed for me, gave me some food, and told me to lie down with her. Instead, I went out and made inquiries about a woman with whom I had once lived. I found that she was still there. To her lodge I went, and with her I stayed that night. In the morning the other woman was angry. However, I continued staying with this new one. Late on the following night some one woke me up. "Come out," the voice said. I went out with a blanket around me and found my former wife. She it was who was calling me. She said, "In the morning • [659] the annuity payment is to be paid in Necedah. I am going there to-night, and I want you to go with me." "I haven't any money," I answered. "As though you ever had any money of your own when you wanted to do something!" I refused to go with her. She persisted, and finally I went back and lay down. After a while she followed me inside and hit me very hard and called me names. She kicked me and pulled my hair. "If I had anything with which to kill you, I would kill you." Finally I got angry, and she stopped and went away.

§25. *I Get Delirium Tremens*

159* 273 [657]

During the cranberry-picking season I drank all the time, and after that chased the payments. I continued drinking. When the payments had all been made, I went to Black River Falls. I was entirely without money. I was supposed to go back to Wittenberg, but I didn't have the fare. I went back to the Indians and stayed all night. In the morning I was sick. I was shaking from head to foot. When I tried to drink coffee, I would spill it; when I lay down, I used to see big snakes. I cried out and got up. Then when I wanted to go to sleep again, I thought I heard some one calling me. I raised the cover of my bed and looked around, but saw nothing. Whenever the wind blew, I thought I heard singing. I thought I heard imaginary people spit very loudly; I heard them and I could not sleep. As soon as I closed my eyes I began to see things. I saw things that were happening in a distant country. I saw ghosts on horseback, drunk. Five or six of them were on one horse, and they were singing. I recognized them, for they were people who had died long before. I heard the words of their song as they sang:

"I, even I, must die some time, so of what value is anything, I think." [533]

7: Radin E-5 (ca. 1912) 1926 NP12 Winnebago NP12

to them for me to use. Later on, in the fall, when the cranberry season had started, I lived with three women. I never did any work, but simply went from woman to woman. Then the annuity payment was made, and I went around chasing the payment. I sold my horses and spent the money I had.

About this time my father and mother asked me to come to Nebraska. I had been told that my father and mother had joined the peyote people and were eating peyote, and I did not like it. These peyote eaters were doing wrong, were wicked, and that is why I disliked them. Old Thunder Cloud, my brother-in-law, told us the following about them:

"This medicine, the peyote,[10] is one of the four spirits from below. That is why it is bad. These four spirits have always longed for human beings, and now they are getting ahold of them. Those who use the peyote claim that when they die, they will only be going on a

[10] The peyote is a small cactus common in the state of Chihuahua, Mexico, out of which from time immemorial an intoxicating drink has been prepared. The ancient Mexicans were well acquainted with it. For a number of centuries it has been the center of various cults all of which contained marked Christian features. It is only within the last fifty to seventy-five years, however, that some of these cults have spread into the United States. It is from some of the tribes now living in Oklahoma that the Winnebago borrowed it.

The Winnebago either eat the peyote button in its dried state or drink a concoction prepared from it. The effects are various. Every one, however, seems to be agreed upon its causing wonderful color visions. The after effects vary with the individual. I have seen some practically in a state of stupor after eating a large quantity of the buttons, while others seem entirely unaffected and go on with their day's work as though nothing had happened.

The use of the Bible is an entirely new element introduced by the Winnebago.